1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
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their arms decorated with finely plaited arm-badges and their hair with pink and golden ferns. If the rites on Vao are, however, anything like those on Atchin, this statement is far from true. There, the attitude on leaving is, as I have said, one of extreme effacement. Nor would there be any use in so adorning themselves, since the moment they enter the canoe they are made to lie on the floor, covered with mats, stones, paddles, food baskets, coconuts, whole bunches of bananas and all the odds and ends that are carried in the canoe. It is not till they return that they adorn themselves in all the finery of conquering youth.

Once arrived on Oba, the adult members of the expedition go to the inland villages to trade in pigs, leaving the novices and their tutors to carry out the necessary rites, of which the most important are these: [1]

"As they leave the canoe they must ritually bathe, that is to say they must not plunge into the water, but, standing in it only up to their knees, they must, with solemn motions, sprinkle [2] the sea-water copiously over their shoulders, chest, head and arms. Then they unload the provisions which they have brought: wild yams, bananas and coconuts. While bathing and unloading they must remain silent, not uttering a word. Complete silence is obligatory not only now, but during the whole of their sojourn in Oba, as well as during the voyage, both outward and homeward.[3]

"During the whole of the time they maintain a severe fast. It is indeed a hard fast to be restricted to two or three bananas and poor-quality yams a day.

"On the three last days there is a curious rite. For each novice they dig a shallow pit in which they lie on their backs and are covered with plaited coconut leaves. On the fourth day [4] the buried youths rise from the dead, still silent.

"Then, all now being on their feet, they load the canoes with the pigs bought by their elders.

"If the wind is in the proper quarter for sailing home (and they say that at this moment it always is), they pull up the anchor at about four o'clock in the afternoon and next dawn arrive triumphantly at Vao." [5]

Speiser adds (what also occurs on Atchin) that while the novices are away some of their coconut trees and part of their yam-gardens are destroyed.[6]

[1] In the case of the pilgrimage as carried out from Atchin, the Atchinese have a special Lodge built by the shore, which they occupy and in which they enjoy a kind of diplomatic immunity from attack.

[2] Godefroy uses the religious term "asperge."

[3] This is probably a mistake. As the pilgrimage is performed from Atchin, the ban is lifted on the return voyage.

[4] This almost certainly means the fifth day. Confusion as to dates often arises owing to the twenty-four-hour period beginning at sundown.

[5] Godefroy, 1, 1933, pp. 132-3. Here is another confusion. Twice elsewhere he states that the rite lasts ten days.

[6] Speiser, 3, p. 288.